FLESH AND SPIRIT

WHY CHRISTIAN ZIONISM CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM



RICK SIMONI

THE OVERCOMER PRESS

A TOP Publication

The Fulfillment in Christ Series

THE FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST SERIES

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A publishing ministry of The Overcomer Magazine

theovercomer.org

First edition | 2026

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Published by The Overcomer Press (TOP)
A publishing ministry of The Overcomer Magazine
theovercomer.org

First edition, 2026.

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This book is a theological examination of covenant, kingdom, and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Its use of the term Christian Zionism is defined in the opening chapters and should not be taken as a judgment upon the salvation, motives, or character of every Christian who uses that name. It is not a political program for or against any modern state.

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About This Book

Flesh and Spirit examines a theological error that has redirected the Church's attention from Christ and His present kingdom toward an earthly nation, a territorial inheritance, and a prophetic program built around the restoration of Old Covenant forms. The concern of this book is not the worth of Jewish people, the safety of any population, or the prudence of any modern government. Those are different questions. The concern here is the interpretation of Scripture and the place of Jesus Christ in the promises of God.

The central contention is simple: the apostles did not read the promises as though Christ were an interruption in Israel's story. They proclaimed Him as the One in whom that story reaches its purpose. The Seed is Christ. The throne is His. The temple is His body and the people joined to Him. The priesthood has been changed. The middle wall has been broken down. Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in one body by the cross.

This is not a claim that God has discarded Jewish people, nor does it deny the possibility of a future, widespread turning of ethnic Israel to Christ. Romans 11 forbids Gentile boasting and holds out real hope for branches now in unbelief. Yet that hope is not a second covenant, a different gospel, or salvation through ancestry. It is mercy in Jesus Christ, the same mercy by which Gentiles stand.

These chapters began as a connected series at The Overcomer Magazine. They have now been revised as one continuous argument. Repetition has been reduced, difficult passages have been addressed, and several earlier statements have been qualified so that the book says neither less nor more than the apostolic witness allows.

What This Book Means by Christian Zionism

The label Christian Zionism covers a wide range of convictions. Some Christians use it simply to express concern for Jewish neighbors or support for the modern State of Israel's continued existence. Others attach the modern state to a detailed prophetic system involving territorial covenant rights, a distinct national destiny for Israel, a future earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem, or even a rebuilt temple and renewed sacrifices.

This book does not attribute every one of those claims to every person called a Christian Zionist. It addresses the theological system that gives ethnic Israel a continuing covenantal standing or redemptive destiny apart from union with Christ, and that expects Old Covenant institutions to return as part of God's kingdom program. Where temple sacrifices, Torah observance, or national separation are discussed, the argument is directed specifically at those forms of the system that teach them.

Political sympathy is not the same thing as covenant theology. A Christian may hold any number of prudential opinions about a modern nation without making that nation the interpretive center of biblical prophecy. The issue before us is narrower and deeper: How do the apostles say the promises of God are fulfilled?

How This Book Reads Scripture

The Old Testament is the Word of God. Its covenants, promises, histories, sacrifices, priesthood, feasts, land, city, and kingdom were not mistakes to be discarded. They were divinely given realities. Yet they were also preparatory. Their full meaning is not reached by stopping before Christ, but by following them to Christ.

The apostles teach us how to read the earlier Scriptures after the death, resurrection, exaltation, and outpouring of the Spirit. Peter interprets the oath to David through the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus (Acts 2:29-36). Paul identifies Christ as the promised Seed and all who belong to Him as heirs (Gal. 3:16, 29). Hebrews explains that the priesthood has changed and that the former covenant has given way to a better one (Heb. 7:12; 8:6-13). James declares that the raising of David's fallen tabernacle agrees with the gathering of the Gentiles into the people of God (Acts 15:13-18).

This method is not arbitrary spiritualization. It is apostolic interpretation. We begin with a passage in its historical setting, follow its development through Scripture, and receive the inspired explanation given after Christ has come. The shadow is not despised; it is understood by the substance. The promise is not cancelled; it is enlarged and secured in the Son of God.

Nor does spiritual mean unreal or nonphysical. Christ rose bodily, will return visibly, and will raise the dead. Creation will be delivered from corruption, and the New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven. Our contrast is between the old creation in Adam and the new creation in Christ; between covenant identity according to flesh and covenant life by the Spirit; and between a temporary territorial type and the greater inheritance of the world to come.

Part One

The Kingdom and the People of God

Chapter 1

A Kingdom Not of This World

> "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world..." - John 18:36

Christian Zionism becomes most persuasive when the kingdom of God has first been pushed into the future. If Christ is not reigning now, if David's throne still stands empty, and if the Church is only a parenthesis in the prophetic plan, then the reader will naturally look to national Israel and earthly Jerusalem for the resumption of the kingdom story. The first question, therefore, is not what happened in 1948. It is what the apostles proclaimed after Jesus rose from the dead.

The Throne of David and the Resurrection of Christ

On the day of Pentecost, Peter did not tell Israel that David's throne must wait for another age. He said that David, "being a prophet," knew that God had sworn an oath concerning the fruit of his loins. Peter then declared that David "seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:30-31). The promised Son of David was raised, exalted to the right hand of God, and made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:32-36).

Peter's reasoning matters. He does not merely place the resurrection beside the Davidic promise. He interprets the oath through the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. The throne is not vacant. The Son of David reigns at the Father's right hand, where He remains until His enemies are made His footstool.

Paul proclaims the same present kingship. Christ must reign "till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). God has raised Him and set Him "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," placing all things under His feet and giving Him to be head over all things to the Church (Eph. 1:20-23). His reign is present; its final victory is still

unfolding. The last enemy, death, awaits destruction at the resurrection.

That is why the present kingdom and the future consummation must not be pulled apart. Christ reigns now, and Christ will appear. His kingdom has been inaugurated, and it will be openly manifested in glory. Present rule does not erase future hope; it gives future hope its foundation.

Not of This World

When Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," He did not say His kingdom has no consequences in this world or no future for the created order. The point concerns its source and character. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" (John 18:36). His authority does not rise from earthly power, national force, or human conquest. It comes from above.

The kingdom is therefore not established by borders, armies, elections, or ancestry. It comes through the crucified and risen King, is entered by new birth, and advances by the witness of the Holy Ghost. When the disciples asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus redirected them from speculation about times and seasons to Spirit-empowered testimony "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:6-8). The worldwide mission was not a postponement of the kingdom. It was the appointed consequence of the King's enthronement.

The Enlargement of David's Tabernacle

Acts 15 makes the same point from another direction. When Gentiles were turning to God, James did not describe their conversion as an unforeseen interruption. He said, "To this agree the words of the prophets," and cited Amos concerning the rebuilding of David's fallen tabernacle so that the residue of men and the Gentiles called by God's name might seek the Lord (Acts 15:15-17).

The apostolic expectation was not a restored ethnic enclosure. David's kingdom had reached its promised King and was opening to the nations. The gathering of the Gentiles agreed with the prophets because the Son of David was reigning.

The True Center

This is where the theological form of Christian Zionism redirects the Church's gaze. It makes the modern nation, a future temple, or an earthly capital the organizing center of prophecy. Yet the apostles organize the promises around Christ.

He is the promised Seed (Gal. 3:16). He is the Son of David upon the throne (Acts 2:30-36). He is the true temple raised in three days (John 2:19-21). He is the Mediator of the better covenant (Heb. 8:6). Through Him, Jew and Gentile have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:18).

The issue is not whether God keeps His Word. He does. The issue is whether we will receive the apostolic explanation of how He has kept it. The promises have not been abandoned, but neither do they remain waiting outside Christ. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20).

Chapter 2

The Natural Man and the Natural Nation

> "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God..." - 1 Corinthians 2:14

The expression natural man must be handled carefully. Paul is describing the man who does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. He is not giving us permission to declare every sincere Christian with a mistaken prophetic framework unregenerate. Believers can inherit systems they have never seriously examined. They may read particular passages according to the flesh while truly belonging to Christ.

The danger is real nevertheless. A flesh-centered hermeneutic judges covenant standing by descent, identifies inheritance chiefly with territory, and expects the kingdom to return to national and ceremonial forms. It can remain blind to the greater reality even while using biblical words.

From Adam to Christ

Paul writes, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46). In context, he is explaining resurrection and the contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam. We should not turn one verse into a universal rule detached from its setting. Yet the movement from Adam to Christ does disclose a pattern that the rest of the New Testament repeatedly confirms: the first creation cannot inherit the incorruptible kingdom; life comes through the risen Man from heaven.

The same apostolic witness shows the movement from circumcision in the flesh to circumcision of the heart, from the temple made with hands to the living temple, from the Levitical priesthood to the unchangeable priesthood of Christ, and from Jerusalem below to Jerusalem above. These conclusions do not

rest on a clever formula. They rest on the inspired interpretation of the types.

Israel According to the Flesh

Paul can speak of "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18), and he can also say, "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). The first expression recognizes a real historical people. The second denies that natural descent by itself establishes saving covenant membership.

Israel according to the flesh received immense privileges: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises, and the fathers; and of them, according to the flesh, Christ came (Rom. 9:4-5). Nothing is gained by denying that history. Yet privilege is not union with Christ. Paul grieved for his kinsmen precisely because ancestry could not save them.

The New Testament insists upon the distinction:

- Those who are of faith are the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7).
- The children of the promise are counted for the seed (Rom. 9:8).
- True circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit (Rom. 2:28-29).
- In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek as a basis of covenant privilege (Gal. 3:28).

These statements do not erase Jewish identity or history. They deny that flesh can create a second entrance into the promises.

The Spiritual Man Sees Christ

A carnal reading looks for the decisive fulfillment in a nation, a bloodline, a building, or a strip of earth. The spiritual reading taught by the apostles sees the same Scriptures reaching their purpose in the crucified, risen, and exalted Son.

This is not replacement. Christ did not arrive to steal another people's inheritance. He is the promised Heir. Those joined to Him, whether Jew or Gentile, share what belongs to Him. "And

if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

The question is therefore not whether a believer has mastered every prophetic detail. The question is whether our interpretation permits Christ to be the substance of the promises. A system may confess Him as Saviour while still relocating the center of expectation to the things He fulfilled. The needed correction is not condemnation of every believer within that system. It is a return to the mind of the Spirit in the apostolic Word.

Chapter 3

Not All Israel

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." - Romans 9:6

Romans 9 begins with grief. Paul could wish himself accursed for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. That sorrow rules out both contempt and carelessness. He is not using theology to dismiss Jewish people. He is explaining why the unbelief of so many Israelites does not mean the Word of God has failed.

Privilege and Promise

Israel possessed privileges no other nation possessed. Yet Paul immediately places a dividing line within Israel: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Rom. 9:7). Ishmael was Abraham's son according to the flesh, but the line of promise was called in Isaac. Jacob and Esau shared the same parents, yet God's purpose according to election did not rest upon natural qualification or human works.

Paul's point is not that history was unreal. Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes truly belonged to the historical administration of the promise. His point is that flesh never controlled grace. God was always free to carry His purpose according to promise, and that purpose has now reached Christ.

The Children of Promise

"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. 9:8). This sentence cuts through every theory of saving privilege based upon ancestry. It does not say that Jewish people are beyond mercy. Romans 11 will say the opposite. It says that the covenant family in its saving sense is created by promise and faith, not blood.

Across Paul's letters the conclusion is consistent. Those who are of faith are the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7). Those who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29). We are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3).

The people of God are therefore not two redeemed peoples travelling toward separate destinies. Christ "hath made both one" and has created in Himself "one new man" (Eph. 2:14-15). Both are reconciled unto God in one body by the cross. Both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Gentile believers do not replace believing Jews; they are made fellowcitizens with them in the household of God.

One People Does Not Mean Gentile Supremacy

This truth has sometimes been stated in a way that sounds as though the Church is essentially Gentile and has taken something away from Israel. Paul allows no such boast. The earliest believers, apostles, and witnesses were Jewish. Gentiles were strangers from the covenants of promise and were brought near by the blood of Christ. They did not create the olive tree and do not support its root.

The right conclusion is neither two peoples nor Gentile replacement. It is one people in the Messiah of Israel. Unbelieving Jews need the same Christ Gentiles need; believing Jews are not absorbed into a Gentile institution but stand in their own Messiah alongside believing Gentiles.

Has the Word of God Failed?

No. God's promises have reached their appointed Heir. The remnant in Paul's day showed His faithfulness, and the hope for broken branches shows that His mercy is not exhausted.

Romans 9 denies that ancestry defines saving Israel. Romans 11 forbids arrogance and leaves Jewish people within reach of mercy. There is no covenant salvation outside Christ, but unbelief need not be final.

Part Two

The Promise and Its Heir

Chapter 4

The Land or the Lord

> "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country..." - Hebrews 11:9

God truly promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed. Any interpretation that treats that promise as empty language has begun badly. The question is not whether the gift was real. The question is whether Canaan was the final extent of the inheritance or a historical and typological stage in a greater promise.

Gift and Occupation

Two features of the Old Testament must be distinguished. The Abrahamic promise of the land was grounded in God's purpose and oath. Israel's continued occupation and enjoyment of that land under Moses were conditioned upon covenant obedience. Deuteronomy 28 warns of expulsion for rebellion, while promising restoration upon repentance.

We should therefore not collapse the original promise into the Mosaic conditions, as though Abraham earned the gift. Nor should we ignore those conditions and treat possession of the land as an unconditional certificate of divine approval for every generation.

Joshua records a real historical fulfillment: "And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers... there failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Josh. 21:43, 45). The land was given, possessed, lost through judgment, and restored. That history must be honored before its typological purpose is considered.

Abraham Looked Beyond Canaan

Hebrews tells us how Abraham himself lived within the promise. He sojourned in the land "as in a strange country," dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:9-10).

The patriarchs confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They desired "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11:16). Heavenly does not mean unreal. It means prepared by God, coming from God, and belonging to the age of resurrection. Revelation does not leave the holy city suspended in a distant heaven; John sees it coming down from God.

Abraham's horizon was therefore larger than Canaan. Paul states the enlargement plainly when he speaks of "the promise, that he should be the heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). The inheritance is not narrowed to one territory. In Christ it opens to the renewed creation.

The Land as Rest and Type

Canaan gave Israel rest from enemies, yet Hebrews 4 observes that Joshua did not provide the final rest. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). The historical rest was real, but it pointed beyond itself.

The Levites were given no territorial portion like the other tribes, because the LORD was their inheritance (Josh. 13:33). David confessed, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup" (Ps. 16:5). Within the old order itself, the greater portion was already being revealed.

We should therefore say more carefully than "Christ is the land." Scripture does not use that exact identification. Christ is our true inheritance, our rest, and the One in whom the promise reaches its goal. The land functions as a type of life under God's rule and of the better country secured in Him.

Not Territorial but Worldwide

The New Covenant does not exchange a real earth for a vague spiritual afterlife. The meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). Creation waits for deliverance from corruption (Rom. 8:19-23). God will gather together in Christ all things in heaven and earth (Eph. 1:10).

The contrast is not physical versus spiritual. It is Canaan as a bounded national type versus the world as the inheritance of the risen Christ and those joined to Him. Christian Zionism makes the type the permanent center. The apostles enlarge the promise until it fills the new creation.

The land must not become the lord. The Lord Himself is our portion, and in Him the saints inherit far more than Canaan could contain.

Chapter 5

The Everlasting Covenant Argument

"He hath remembered his covenant for ever..." - Psalm 105:8

One of the most common arguments for a continuing national program is that God called His covenant with Abraham everlasting. The conclusion is then drawn that every outward feature must continue in the same form and remain attached to natural descendants regardless of their relation to Christ.

That conclusion does not follow. God's faithfulness is everlasting. His purpose in Christ is everlasting. But Scripture itself teaches that covenantal institutions can reach their appointed goal and give way to the reality they anticipated.

More Than a Word Study

The Hebrew word often translated everlasting, olam, can describe what is eternal without end, but it can also describe an ordinance belonging to an age or continuing throughout its appointed covenantal duration. The meaning cannot be settled by the English word alone. Context and the later Word of God must govern.

The Old Testament uses enduring language for circumcision (Gen. 17:13), the Sabbath covenant (Ex. 31:16), the priestly service (Ex. 40:15), and feast observance (Lev. 23:41). Yet the New Testament does not preserve each institution unchanged. Circumcision avails nothing as a covenant boundary in Christ (Gal. 5:6). Sabbaths are called a shadow of things to come (Col. 2:16-17). The priesthood has been changed because a different Priest has arisen (Heb. 7:11-12).

This is not proof that everlasting means temporary whenever we wish. It is proof that a dictionary definition cannot overrule apostolic teaching about fulfillment.

Fulfilled Does Not Mean Broken

Christ's fulfillment of an institution is not God's repudiation of His Word. The Passover was not made false when Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. The temple was not meaningless when the true Temple stood among men. The Levitical priesthood was not a failure when it yielded to the Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

The change of priesthood is especially decisive. Hebrews does not say priesthood itself has vanished. It says, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). Christ possesses "an unchangeable priesthood" and ever lives to make intercession (Heb. 7:24-25). There is no return to the Levitical priesthood because its purpose has been fulfilled in a better Priest.

The same principle governs the Abrahamic promise. The enduring promise does not remain suspended beside Christ. It is confirmed and inherited in Him.

What God Swore to Abraham

The covenant included land, seed, nation, and blessing. Each reaches a greater expression in the New Testament. The Seed comes to His fullness in Christ (Gal. 3:16). The blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ as the promise of the Spirit is received by faith (Gal. 3:14). Those who belong to Christ become Abraham's seed and heirs (Gal. 3:29). Abraham's inheritance is described as the world (Rom. 4:13).

None of this makes God's oath smaller. It makes it larger. The promise to bless all families of the earth was never meant to terminate in one nation or one territory.

The everlasting covenant that saves is finally located in "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20). God's faithfulness is not proved by restoring the shadows. It is proved by raising the great Shepherd of the sheep and perfecting His people through Him.

Chapter 6

The Seed of Abraham

> "And to thy seed, which is Christ." - Galatians 3:16

Paul's argument in Galatians is not that Isaac, Jacob, or the twelve tribes had no historical place in the promise. They plainly did. Through that chosen line Christ came according to the flesh, and Israel received the covenants, worship, promises, and fathers.

Paul's point is climactic. The many generations do not constitute an independent final heir alongside Christ. The promise was moving toward One. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one... which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

The Promised Heir

Genesis promised that in Abraham's seed all nations of the earth would be blessed. The history passes through Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David, but it does not stop with any of them. The royal and saving purpose arrives in Jesus.

This prevents two opposite errors. We must not deny the historical line through which God worked. Neither may we detach that line from the Messiah and treat natural descent as a permanent co-heirship. Stewardship of the promise was never ownership apart from the Promised One.

The Inheritance Is in Christ

Galatians 3 joins Christ and His people without confusing them. Christ is the Seed in the primary and climactic sense. Those who are baptized into Christ and belong to Him are counted as Abraham's seed because of their union with Him. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

The text does not say, If ye are Gentiles, ye replace Israel. It says, If ye are Christ's. The decisive relation is neither Gentile identity nor Jewish identity, but belonging to the Son.

The blessings likewise gather in Him. The land widens into the inheritance of the world. The holy nation becomes a people called out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9). The blessing promised to the nations is the Spirit received through faith (Gal. 3:14). The family of Abraham consists of those who share Abraham's faith.

No Promise Outside the Promised One

This is the pressure point for every two-program system. If Christ is the Heir, on what basis can there be a separate covenant inheritance possessed apart from Him? If Jew and Gentile are made one in Him, where does the apostle establish a second redeemed people outside the one new man? If the blessing is received through faith, how can unbelief preserve saving covenant standing?

The answer is not that God has no continuing concern for Jewish people. Romans 11 reveals both belovedness for the fathers' sakes and the possibility of grafting in again. The answer is that every act of saving mercy brings the recipient into Christ. There is no bypass around the Seed.

The good news is gloriously inclusive without becoming indiscriminate. Gentiles once far off are made nigh by Christ's blood. Jews who do not abide in unbelief are grafted in again. Both live from the same holy root, confess the same Lord, receive the same Spirit, and share the same inheritance.

One Seed. One promise. One new man. One Lord.

Part Three

Temple, Olive Tree, and the Two Jerusalems

Chapter 7

Temple Fever

> "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." - John 2:19

Not every Christian Zionist expects a rebuilt temple, and not every one who expects such a temple welcomes renewed sacrifices. Yet influential forms of the system do treat a third temple, a restored priesthood, or sacrificial worship as necessary elements in future prophecy. That expectation must be tested by the finality of Christ's work.

The Temple That Was

The Jerusalem temple was holy because God appointed it. Its altar, priesthood, sacrifices, veil, lampstand, and mercy seat formed a divinely ordered witness. Yet they were copies and shadows of heavenly things (Heb. 8:5). Their holiness did not make them the final dwelling of God.

Solomon himself confessed that the heaven of heavens could not contain God, much less the house he had built (1 Kings 8:27). The prophets warned that the temple could become a false confidence when the people rejected God's Word. Jesus finally declared, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38).

At the cross, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. Access to God was opened through the body and blood of Jesus, not through a renovated earthly sanctuary.

The Temple That Is

Jesus identified His own body as the temple that would be raised in three days (John 2:19-21). Those united to Him become living stones in a spiritual house and a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). Paul asks the local assembly, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).

This movement is neither metaphorical decoration nor hostility toward the old temple. It is fulfillment. The presence once signified in a building now dwells in Christ and, by the Spirit, in His body.

The Sacrifice Once Offered

Hebrews leaves no room for a divinely required return to animal offerings. Christ "by one offering... hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Where there is remission of sins, "there is no more offering for sin" (Heb. 10:18).

Some attempt to preserve future sacrifices by calling them memorials. But the New Testament gives no command to restore them as memorials and repeatedly contrasts their repetition with the once-for-all offering of Christ. The Supper appointed by the Lord proclaims His death without reviving the altar that prefigured it.

The Priesthood Has Changed

We should not say there is no more priesthood. There is a better priesthood. Jesus, made a Priest by the power of an endless life, has an unchangeable priesthood (Heb. 7:16, 24). Because the priesthood has changed, the law governing it has changed as well.

To expect divine restoration of the Levitical order is therefore not harmless architectural enthusiasm. It reverses the direction of Hebrews. It makes the inferior ministry, which could never perfect the worshipper, reappear beside the perfect Priest.

A Better House

God now dwells more fully in His people. In Christ, believing Jews and Gentiles are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22).

Israel's ancient worship points to Christ. We need no other veil, altar, or mortal priesthood. By Jesus' blood we enter the holiest under our High Priest (Heb. 10:19-21).

Chapter 8

Romans 11 and the Olive Tree

> "Boast not against the branches." - Romans 11:18

Romans 11 is not a footnote to the question of Israel. It is Paul's sustained warning against two errors: unbelief among natural branches and pride among grafted Gentiles. Any theology that uses the chapter to preserve two ways of covenant blessing has missed the condition of grafting. Any theology that uses it to boast that Gentiles have replaced Jews has ignored the apostle's rebuke.

God Has Not Cast Away His People

Paul answers his own question with force: "God forbid. For I also am an Israelite" (Rom. 11:1). He points to the remnant in Elijah's day and concludes, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5).

God's faithfulness was visible in Jewish believers, beginning with the apostles themselves. Israel's widespread unbelief did not make God's Word void. Yet Paul does not say that unbelieving Israelites were enjoying salvation while outside Christ. The remnant was distinguished by grace and faith; the rest were blinded.

What Is the Olive Tree?

The olive tree is not the Mosaic law, rabbinic tradition, or the modern State of Israel. Neither should the root be identified with Christ in a way that erases Paul's emphasis upon the patriarchal promises. The root is the holy covenantal root from which the people of promise draw their nourishment: God's promise to the fathers, now confirmed and fulfilled in Christ.

The tree represents the one covenant people of God across redemptive history. Some natural branches were broken off because of unbelief. Wild Gentile branches were grafted in by faith and became partakers "of the root and fatness of the olive tree" (Rom. 11:17). They did not plant a new Gentile tree. They were incorporated into blessings they did not create.

This image preserves continuity without preserving unbelief as covenant membership. It also preserves distinction without establishing two redeemed peoples. There is one tree, one holy root, and one condition of standing: faith.

The Warning to Gentiles

"Boast not against the branches." Gentile believers have often violated this command. Paul gives no permission for antisemitism, contempt, or the rewriting of salvation history as a Gentile achievement. "Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee" (Rom. 11:18).

Nor may Gentiles presume upon grace. "Be not highminded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20). If God did not spare natural branches in unbelief, grafted branches have no ground for arrogance. The olive tree humbles everyone. Jews stand by faith. Gentiles stand by faith. Mercy leaves no room for fleshly boasting.

They Shall Be Grafted In

Paul speaks directly about unbelieving Jewish branches: "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again" (Rom. 11:23). Their restoration is possible, desirable, and natural to the tree. Yet the stated condition is that they not remain in unbelief.

They are not restored by possession of land, reconstruction of a temple, or revival of national power. They are grafted in through faith in their Messiah. The same apostle who grieves for them magnifies his ministry among Gentiles in hope that he might provoke some of his own people to salvation.

Blindness in Part

Paul then reveals a mystery: "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25). In part means the blindness is neither total nor necessarily final. A remnant believes now, and the language of until directs our attention beyond the present condition.

"And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). Faithful interpreters have understood all Israel in more than one way. Some see the complete people of God, Jew and Gentile together. Others see the elect remnant of Israel across history. I believe the flow of Paul's argument allows, and most naturally suggests, a future, widespread ingathering of ethnic Israel into Christ.

That hope must be stated exactly. It is not national salvation apart from repentance. It is not a restored Mosaic covenant. It is not another body beside the Church. The Deliverer turns away ungodliness, takes away sins, and brings Jewish people into the same saving mercy revealed in the gospel.

Beloved for the Fathers' Sakes

Paul can say that, concerning the gospel, they are enemies for the Gentiles' sakes, yet concerning election they are beloved for the fathers' sakes (Rom. 11:28). Historical election still matters in God's dealings. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29).

But belovedness is not a substitute for reconciliation. Paul's entire burden is salvation. The faithfulness of God to the fathers is displayed not by maintaining unbelief as a parallel covenant path, but by showing mercy in the promised Son.

Romans 11 therefore gives no support to either Christian Zionist dualism or Gentile triumphalism. It gives us one tree, severe warnings, deep humility, and radiant hope. God has concluded all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all. The proper end is not a chart but worship: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36).

Chapter 9

Two Jerusalems

> "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." - Galatians 4:26

The New Testament speaks about earthly Jerusalem with historical honor, deep sorrow, and solemn judgment. It also speaks of Jerusalem above, the city of the living God. These are not interchangeable symbols.

Hagar and Sarah

In Galatians 4, Paul uses Hagar and Sarah allegorically to contrast two covenants. Hagar answers to Mount Sinai and "Jerusalem which now is," for she is in bondage with her children. "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:25-26).

Paul is not expressing ethnic hatred or contempt for a city. He is warning believers not to return to the covenant of bondage. The earthly city, when identified with Sinai and confidence in the flesh, cannot be the mother of the free children of promise.

Ye Are Come to Mount Sion

Hebrews does not say believers will someday come to Mount Sion. It says, "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). This present access is spiritual and covenantal. Through Christ we have entered the festal assembly, the church of the firstborn, and the presence of God the Judge of all.

Again, heavenly must not be confused with nonexistent. The city has God as its builder. Revelation 21 presents New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride. Its origin is heavenly, its glory is divine, and its final manifestation belongs to the new creation.

What About Earthly Jerusalem?

Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He entered it as its King and pronounced judgment upon the generation that rejected Him. The city also remained the birthplace of the apostolic witness. We should therefore resist slogans that flatten its complex biblical place.

Revelation 11:8 calls the great city where our Lord was crucified "spiritually... Sodom and Egypt." Many interpreters understand this as Jerusalem under covenant judgment, while others read the imagery differently. If the passage is applied to Jerusalem, its historical and prophetic setting must be stated; it should not be turned into a careless prediction that the present city is "soon to be judged."

The decisive point does not depend upon resolving every detail of Revelation 11. Paul has already told us which Jerusalem defines the children of promise: Jerusalem above.

No Continuing City

"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). The patriarchs sought the city whose builder and maker is God. Believers now belong to that heavenly commonwealth, though we still await its unveiled fullness.

This frees the Church from making any earthly capital the spiritual center of her hope. It does not forbid love for a place, concern for its inhabitants, or recognition of its historical importance. It forbids attaching New Covenant identity to geography.

We do not move from old Jerusalem to a rival Gentile city. We come to Mount Sion in Christ. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour who will transform our bodies (Phil. 3:20-21). The city we seek comes from God and gathers a people from every kindred, tongue, people, and nation.

Chapter 10

Why the Church Must Not Return to Sinai

> "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched... But ye are come unto mount Sion..." - Hebrews 12:18, 22

Sinai was holy. God descended, spoke, and gave His righteous law. The fault was not in God's holiness or in the law, which Paul calls holy, just, and good. The weakness lay in sinful flesh and in a covenant that could expose sin without imparting the resurrection life needed to overcome it.

A Covenant of Distance

At Sinai the people stood afar off. The mountain burned with fire and could not be touched. Even Moses exceedingly feared and quaked. The law revealed God's righteousness, restrained evil, ordered Israel's life, and served the purpose for which it was given. Yet it could not make the comers thereunto perfect.

The letter engraved in stones brought condemnation and death because it addressed fallen men without changing their hearts (2 Cor. 3:6-9). The veil became the sign of an order in which access remained restricted.

Brought Near by Blood

The New Covenant brings what Sinai could not. Those once far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). God's law is written in minds and hearts. Sins and iniquities are remembered no more. The Spirit gives life.

Christ did not destroy the righteousness to which the law bore witness. He fulfilled it, bore its curse, and brought His people into the obedience of faith. Grace is not lawlessness. It is God's power forming Christ within a people who could never be perfected by commands written on stone.

Which Claims Are Being Addressed?

Not every Christian Zionist advocates Torah observance, a rebuilt Levitical priesthood, or renewed animal sacrifices. Those positions are more common in particular dispensational and Hebrew Roots settings than in the whole movement. But wherever Christians treat these Old Covenant forms as a future divine ideal, Hebrews speaks directly.

The law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). Sabbaths and feast days were shadows, but the body is of Christ (Col. 2:16-17). The former commandment was set aside because of its weakness and unprofitableness in bringing perfection, and a better hope was introduced by which we draw nigh to God (Heb. 7:18-19).

Christ Fulfills the Shadows

It is imprecise to say the Church fulfills the Old Covenant. Christ fulfills what the Old Covenant foreshadowed. Jew and Gentile, joined to Him, become one body and share the promised blessings of the New Covenant.

The Church is a royal priesthood and holy nation because she belongs to the Priest-King. She is God's temple because His Spirit dwells in her. She is not an institutional replacement for Israel. She is the assembly of the one new man, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

No Return to the Levitical Priesthood

There is no more veil barring access, no more animal blood for sin, and no return to the Levitical priesthood. There is, however, a living High Priest. Jesus has passed into the heavens and ever lives to intercede.

The cross is not a doorway back to Moses. It opens the new and living way. We honor Sinai by going where it pointed: to the Mediator whose blood speaks better things.

Part Four

The Better Country

Chapter 11

Our Inheritance in Christ

> "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly..." - Hebrews 11:16

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob received the promise of land, yet lived in that land as strangers. Their tents testified that Canaan itself could not be the final city. They looked for what God alone could build.

From Land to World

The New Testament does not make the inheritance smaller or less real. It expands it. Paul describes Abraham as "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). Jesus promises that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). God purposes to gather together in Christ all things in heaven and earth (Eph. 1:10).

The inheritance is therefore no longer restricted to one national territory. It is universal in scope, eternal in duration, and spiritual in source and character. Spiritual does not mean immaterial. It means belonging to the Spirit, secured in the risen Christ, and fitted for the new creation.

Peter describes an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for believers who are kept by God's power (1 Pet. 1:4-5). What is reserved in heaven is not necessarily destined to remain away from earth. Our Lord Himself is in heaven until the time of restoration, and He will return. The New Jerusalem is heavenly and comes down. The bodies of the saints are raised spiritual bodies, yet they are bodies indeed.

The Better Country Is Not a Rejection of Creation

The Christian hope is not escape from God's creation but its redemption. Creation groans for deliverance into the liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:19-23). The final vision is not redeemed souls abandoning the earth while national Israel enjoys material promises below. It is God dwelling with His people, death abolished, and all things made new.

This is why the physical-versus-spiritual contrast can mislead. The better contrast is restricted type versus enlarged fulfillment; old creation versus new creation; inheritance in Adam versus inheritance in the risen Christ.

Heirs of God

At the heart of the inheritance is God Himself. "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance" (Ps. 16:5). Believers are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). In Him we have obtained an inheritance (Eph. 1:11).

The land taught Israel what it meant to live under God's rule, enjoy His provision, and find rest from enemies. But the type cannot contain the fulfillment. In Christ, God gives Himself, His kingdom, the world to come, and the fellowship of the saints in light.

Pilgrims with a Real Hope

To confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims is not to neglect present obedience. Heavenly citizenship should make the Church more faithful on earth, not less. Because her kingdom does not arise from earthly power, she can bear witness without becoming the servant of nationalism. Because she expects bodily resurrection and a renewed creation, she can labor in hope without making any present nation the kingdom of God.

"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). That confession relativizes every flag and border without making us indifferent to our neighbors. It keeps the Church free to proclaim one Lord and one gospel to all.

Chapter 12

Return to Christ

> "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." - Mark 9:7

The error examined in this book is ultimately an error of center. When a prophetic system is organized around ethnic destiny, territorial restoration, or the revival of shadows, Christ may still be honored in its statements of faith while being displaced in its interpretation.

The apostolic proclamation will not permit that displacement. Jesus is the promised Seed, the enthroned Son of David, the true Temple, the Mediator of the better covenant, the unchangeable Priest, and the Head of the one new man. He is not a means by which two unrelated programs are advanced. He is the One in whom the whole purpose of God is gathered.

From Sinai to Sion

"Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched... But ye are come unto mount Sion" (Heb. 12:18, 22). The movement of redemptive history is forward. It moves from promise to fulfillment, shadow to substance, repeated sacrifice to one offering, mortal priests to the Priest who ever lives, separation to bold access, and one chosen nation as the vessel of promise to a redeemed people from all nations in the chosen Son.

To move forward is not to dishonor what came before. A shadow is honored when it brings us to the body that cast it. Moses is honored when we hear the Prophet greater than Moses. David is honored when we bow to his risen Son and Lord. Abraham is honored when people of every nation share his faith and receive his promised Seed.

What Cannot Be Shaken

The kingdoms of this world rise and fall. Political alliances change. Borders move. Temples built with hands can be destroyed. But believers have received "a kingdom which cannot be moved" (Heb. 12:28).

That kingdom is present because the King is enthroned. It is advancing because the gospel is going to the nations. It remains future because death has not yet been destroyed and the creation still groans. At His appearing, Christ will raise the dead, judge the world, and openly manifest the rule He now exercises from the Father's right hand.

Nothing in that hope requires a retreat to Old Covenant shadows. The future belongs to the Lamb, not to the restoration of what His sacrifice fulfilled.

Mercy for Jew and Gentile

Returning to Christ also guards the heart from hostility toward Jewish people. The cross excludes boasting. Gentiles were far off and were brought near by grace. Natural branches can be grafted in again. If a great turning of ethnic Israel lies ahead, it will display the mercy and faithfulness of God, not the sufficiency of flesh.

The Church should therefore reject both theological dualism and contempt. We preach Christ to every person. We pray for mercy. We remember the root that bears us. We refuse to give ancestry what belongs to new birth, and we refuse to use that truth as an excuse for pride.

The Nearness of the Living Christ

The fulfillment of the promises is more than an answer to a prophetic argument. It is an invitation to live near to God. Through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:18). The Saviour who reigns in heaven is not distant from His people. By the Holy Ghost, we share even now in the fellowship John proclaimed: "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

The shadows were given to lead us into this living reality. To recognize their fulfillment is to discover that prayer, obedience, suffering, and ordinary daily work may all be lived in communion with Him. We need not wait for an earthly capital or a restored sanctuary to draw near. The unseen Lord is present, and His grace teaches us to walk before the Father with confidence, gratitude, and love.

This present fellowship does not exhaust our hope. We still await His visible appearing, the resurrection of our bodies, and the deliverance of creation from corruption. Yet the life we shall know in fullness has already begun in Christ. Let us therefore receive the nearness He gives today, while looking for the glory He will reveal.

Final Word

See the glory of the Son. Set your affection above, come to Mount Sion, hold fast the better covenant, and refuse every system that makes the shadow compete with the substance. Christ reigns now and will return in glory. Until then, bear witness to the risen Lord among all nations.

Appendix: Difficult Passages and the Hope of Israel

A Christ-centered reading should not evade passages commonly raised in objection. The following texts deserve fuller treatment than a slogan can provide. They do not require a second people of God, but they do keep us humble about the manner in which God's purposes may yet unfold in history.

Luke 1:32-33 and the Throne of David

Gabriel announces that the Lord God will give Jesus "the throne of his father David," that He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and that of His kingdom there will be no end. The question is whether this throne remains entirely future and earthly.

Acts 2 supplies the apostolic answer. Peter cites God's oath to David and relates it to the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. Jesus now sits at God's right hand as Lord and Christ. His session in heaven is not an alternative to Davidic kingship but its exalted fulfillment.

The prophecy still has an unconsummated dimension. The reign now exercised in the midst of enemies will be openly manifested; the last enemy will be destroyed; every knee will bow. But the future manifestation does not require us to declare the throne empty in the present.

Acts 3:19-21 and the Restitution of All Things

Peter calls his hearers to repent so that their sins may be blotted out and speaks of "the times of restitution of all things" foretold by the prophets. Some take this as proof that the national and territorial order of Old Testament Israel must be restored.

The expression is broader than that conclusion. The prophets speak not only of Israel's restoration but of resurrection,

judgment, the Spirit poured out, the nations seeking the Lord, creation renewed, and righteousness filling the earth. The One whom heaven receives until those times is the same Christ already enthroned.

Nothing in Acts 3 teaches a restored Levitical priesthood or salvation outside Christ. The immediate summons is repentance and faith in the Prophet like Moses. Restoration is governed by Him and by the apostolic interpretation of the prophets elsewhere.

Matthew 19:28 and the Twelve Tribes

Jesus tells the apostles that "in the regeneration," when the Son of man sits upon the throne of His glory, they will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The saying affirms a real future vindication and rule. It also uses Israel's covenantal structure to describe the apostolic administration of the renewed people of God.

The twelve apostles already form the foundation of New Jerusalem, upon whose gates are the names of the twelve tribes (Rev. 21:12-14). The imagery does not separate Israel and the Church into unrelated peoples; it joins Israel's hope and apostolic fulfillment in one city and one bride.

Whether Matthew 19:28 includes a particular future dealing with ethnic Israel need not be dogmatically denied. It does not establish a second gospel or revive the old covenant. Any future role remains under the Son of man and within the regeneration He brings.

Matthew 23:39 and Jerusalem's Future Welcome

After lamenting over Jerusalem, Jesus says, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Some understand this entirely as language of judgment connected with His coming against that generation. Others see an implication that Jerusalem will one day welcome her Messiah.

The latter possibility fits the hope of Romans 11, provided it is not made a route around repentance. To say, "Blessed is he that cometh," is to confess the rejected Christ. If Jerusalem or a great company of Jewish people yet makes that confession, it will be a triumph of the gospel, not of unbelieving covenant privilege.

The verse therefore permits hope without establishing a separate redemptive program.

Romans 11:25-29 and All Israel

Romans 11 has been treated at length in Chapter 8. Its essential boundaries should be repeated. Israel's blindness is partial. Gentiles must not be wise in their own conceits. The broken branches can be grafted in again if they do not remain in unbelief. Israel remains beloved for the fathers' sakes, and God's gifts and calling are without repentance.

I read "all Israel shall be saved" as allowing and probably indicating a future, widespread ingathering of ethnic Israel into Christ. This is not dogmatism about timing or political events. Paul does not direct us to a state, border, or temple. He directs us to the Deliverer who turns ungodliness away and takes away sins.

The future of Israel, therefore, is not outside Christ. It is Israel in Christ.

Zechariah 12 and 14

Zechariah describes mourning over the pierced One, living waters flowing from Jerusalem, the LORD as King over all the earth, nations coming up to worship, and holiness extending even to the bells of the horses. These prophecies employ the language of Jerusalem, feast, altar, and temple.

The New Testament begins their fulfillment in Christ. John applies "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" to Jesus at the cross (John 19:37). Jesus identifies Himself as the source of living water through the Spirit (John 7:37-39). The

nations are already being gathered to the King. Holiness is no longer confined to a sanctuary but marks the whole people of God.

There may remain a future historical and consummative layer in which nations and ethnic Israel experience these realities more fully. Yet no future fulfillment can contradict Hebrews by reinstating an effective Levitical priesthood or sacrifices for sin. Prophetic imagery must be read through the finished work of Christ. The future can enlarge the substance; it cannot dethrone it in favor of the shadow.

A Rule for Difficult Texts

Where details remain open, the settled apostolic truths provide our boundaries:

- Jesus is the only saving Seed and Heir.
- The throne of David is occupied by the risen Christ.
- Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one body.
- The priesthood has changed, and Christ's offering is final.
- No one is grafted into the people of God through unbelief.
- Future mercy toward ethnic Israel brings them into Christ, not around Him.

Within those boundaries we can study difficult prophecy patiently, refuse speculative certainty, and remain open to whatever God has yet to do in history.

Glossary

Abrahamic Covenant
God's covenantal promises to Abraham concerning seed, blessing, land, and the blessing of the nations. The New Testament identifies Christ as the climactic Seed and those belonging to Him as heirs of the promise.

Christian Zionism
A broad label for Christian support of Zionism or the modern State of Israel. In this book it refers more specifically to the theological system that gives national Israel an ongoing covenantal destiny or territorial entitlement apart from union with Christ, often within a distinct prophetic program.

Covenant
A divinely established relationship ordered by God's promise and command. Biblical covenants unfold God's redemptive purpose and reach their saving fulfillment in the New Covenant mediated by Christ.

Fulfillment
The bringing of promise, type, and prophecy to their intended goal. Fulfillment does not mean that the earlier Word was false; it means that its purpose has arrived in a greater reality.

Israel According to the Flesh
Paul's expression for ethnic and historical Israel (1 Cor. 10:18). It recognizes a real people and history but does not teach that ancestry alone grants saving covenant membership.

Israel in Christ
A concise way of saying that Israel's promises reach their saving goal in the Messiah and that Jewish salvation, present or future, is found through union with Him rather than through a separate covenant path.

Jerusalem Above
The free and heavenly Jerusalem described in Galatians 4, Hebrews 12, and Revelation 21. It is the city of the living God and the covenantal home of all who belong to Christ.

New Covenant

The covenant promised in Jeremiah and established by the blood of Jesus, bringing forgiveness, the law written upon the heart, and the gift of the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles share its blessings through Christ.

One New Man

Paul's description in Ephesians 2:15 of believing Jews and Gentiles created in Christ as one reconciled people. The phrase denies both Gentile superiority and separate redeemed peoples.

Olive Tree

Paul's image in Romans 11 for the one covenant people nourished by the holy root of God's promises to the fathers, now fulfilled in Christ. Natural branches may be broken off in unbelief or grafted in again through faith; Gentile believers stand only by faith.

Shadow and Substance

The relationship between Old Covenant forms that prefigured Christ and the reality that arrived in Him. A shadow is divinely meaningful, but it must not be restored as a rival to its substance.

Typology

The God-ordained correspondence by which earlier persons, events, institutions, and places anticipate a greater fulfillment in Christ and His kingdom. Sound typology follows patterns confirmed by Scripture rather than imaginative resemblance alone.

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Rick Simoni writes for The Overcomer Magazine, encouraging believers to see the unity of the Scriptures in Jesus Christ and to live in the reality of His finished work, present reign, and indwelling life. His writing emphasizes the movement from shadow to substance, the fellowship of Christ's body, and the obedience that grows from faith.

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